



# The President's Daily Brief

*December 9, 1975*

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON

*Ambassador Godley has cabled a gloomy description of the scene in Beirut this morning, which he describes as "the worst we have experienced." He reports intense mortar, rocket, and machine-gun fire in the hotel area, and pillars of smoke visible from the US chancery despite heavy rains.*

*Plans for a meeting today of leaders of all Lebanese political factions were canceled after leftist leader Jumblatt and Muslim leader Salam refused to attend.*

Army commandos last night moved into Beirut's commercial district to protect government buildings and financial institutions. The action came after the heavy fighting between Christian and Muslim militiamen spread to central Beirut and the city's hotel district.

Army spokesmen have sought to limit adverse Muslim and Palestinian reaction to the move by asserting that the 100-man force is intended only to create a "security belt," and not to enter into the fighting.

This use of the army is the government's most forceful action to end civil unrest this year. It represents a compromise between Interior Minister Shamun, who has long favored calling in the 18,000-man army, and Prime Minister Karami, who has not wanted to alienate his Muslim supporters by involving the army, which is led largely by Christian officers.

The resumption of heavy fighting comes at a time when prospects were good for progress in the political negotiations and when conservative Muslim politicians had begun a cautious effort to isolate the far left politically.

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Radicals both outside and inside the major Christian and Muslim militias were fearful that Phalangist leader Jumayyil, who was in Damascus during the weekend on a peace mission, might strike a bargain with Syrian President Asad. The radicals thus were eager to undermine his mission with a return to violence.

A Muslim delegation that included three former Lebanese prime ministers traveled to Damascus on Sunday, presumably to affirm that Asad had not promised Jumayyil any concessions that would threaten the interests of Lebanese Muslims.

ISRAEL-SYRIA

*The Syrians have been told by the UN commander on the Golan Heights, according to the US ambassador in Damascus, that 13 Israeli surface-to-air missile launchers with missiles were seen on December 2 within 20 kilometers of the UN buffer zone. Under the disengagement agreement, no surface-to-air missile equipment is permitted within 25 kilometers of the zone.*

Syrian Chief of Staff Shihabi told the US ambassador he has also received reports that Israeli "rockets" of an unknown type arrived on the Heights in late November, and that there has been an increase in the number of Israeli tanks and artillery on the Golan in recent days. Shihabi also claimed that the Israelis have been storing significant amounts of artillery shells in the area.

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*The Spanish government's harsh response to demonstrations over the past few days--including two Socialist rallies in Madrid yesterday--appears to be playing into the hands of the Communists.*

The Communists apparently hope to provoke police over-reaction to make the point that Franco-type repression continues. The Communist-dominated Workers' Commissions have called for strikes by construction and metal workers in the Madrid area on Wednesday and Thursday; the strikes could spread to Barcelona and various Basque cities. The Communist-controlled leftist coalition, the Democratic Junta, has appealed to its supporters for a demonstration of "democratic rupture with the political laws of dictatorship" between December 10 and 16.

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*Iceland intends to raise its fishing dispute with the UK at the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels later this week.*

Should there be no escalation in the cod war in the meantime, the cabinet will defer a decision on taking the issue to the UN General Assembly until after the NATO meeting. Prime Minister Hallgrímsson told the US ambassador that although Iceland is deferring an approach to the General Assembly, Reykjavik may send "some sort of communication" to the Security Council. He did not indicate whether this would occur before the NATO meeting.

Hallgrímsson did not specify to the ambassador what he wants NATO to do. The ambassador gained the impression that Hallgrímsson would settle for expressions of concern over the dispute and would accept Secretary General Luns' offer to mediate.

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*Discussions in New Delhi last weekend between Indian officials and a high-level Bangladesh delegation did not eliminate tensions between the two countries, but appear to have sustained the generally positive atmosphere evident at talks in Calcutta last week between Indian and Bengalee border security officials.*

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A rally on Sunday north of Dacca organized by a veteran radical did not have the strong anti-Indian, pro-Muslim flavor that was expected, possibly because of pressure from the Bangladesh government to avoid any provocative statements.



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